

Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption
920 Brush Street
Oakland
Alameda County
California

HABS No. CA-2055

HABS,
CAL,
1-OAK.
6.

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HAD>
CAL.
1- OAK.
6-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. CA-2055

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

Location: 920 Brush Street, Oakland, Alameda County, California.
USGS Oakland West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.563520.4183920.

Present Owner: State of California (1978).

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Vacant, with plans to relocate due to construction of the Route 980 Freeway.

Significance: The Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, built 1920, served as the religious and cultural center of Oakland's Greek community for forty years. The structure's classical Greek features reflect traditional Greek design elements.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

The Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption was designed by Charles Burrell, a local architect, and built in 1920. The church was owned by the Hellenic Community of Oakland and served as the religious and social center for the community. The first Greek immigrants arrived in the area in 1890. The construction of the church in 1920 provided them with the first permanent structure in which to congregate (it was the second such structure in the state). Religious services as well as general assembly meetings were held at the church until an adjacent building, 916 Brush Street, was added. The church was used by the congregation until the 1960s when they moved to a larger structure. The structure was then leased to a local Baptist denomination.

Prepared by Mary Beth Betts
Historic American Buildings Survey
June 1979.

From research compiled by
Federal Highway Administration
Caltrans
1978

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE
ASSUMPTION
HABS No. CA-2055 (Page 2)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

The cruciform-shaped structure is one story with gallery and has a three-bay front. The building is of concrete that has been painted white (scored in some areas to imitate stone) with wooden floors and ceilings. There is a beveled water table around the entire building. The structure sits on the south corner of Tenth and Brush Streets, with its northwest elevation facing Brush Street and its northeast elevation facing Tenth Street.

portico
The northwest (front) elevation of the church is modeled after a Greek temple. The main feature is the pedimented distyle in antis, projecting out from the central bay. The fluted columns are Ionic and the frieze of the pediment contains a Greek phrase which can be roughly translated as "in this church praise God." The roof line of the pediment is decorated with antefixae (two at either end and two at the apex) and crowned by a cross. The portico is reached by eight steps with wrought-iron railings and tripods with lighting fixtures to each side. The main entrance is through double doors with a transom, topped by a denticulated cornice containing an anthemion frieze. There are four grilles flanking the entrance, two at the gallery level and two at either side of the door. The portico is flanked by windows (divided vertically into four sections) with projecting sills, denticulated cornices containing anthemion friezes, and brackets.

The northeast (side) elevation is entered through the projecting wing at the center of the building. This entrance is emphasized by a broken pediment resting on pilasters. The entrance is composed of a door flanked by windows, with three windows at the gallery level; all of this is surrounded by a decorative band containing the Greek fret (meander) motif. The door itself is topped by a cornice with brackets. The windows flanking the doors are separated from the gallery windows by panels (all windows are vertically divided into three or four sections). A stoop with wrought iron railing and tripods containing lighting fixtures leads up to the entrance. There are two openings to either side of the stoop composed of a small window at the gallery level, an anthemion frieze below that and an inset panel below that. At the northern corner of the elevation (nearest the facade) there is a window of similar design to those on the facade.

There is a cross-gable roof with a hemispherical dome at its intersection. The dome contains small rectangular openings, and is crowned by a cross and orb.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE
ASSUMPTION
HABS No. CA-2055 (Page 3)

B. Description of Interior:

The interior is of a cruciform plan with the sanctuary at the southeastern end, a semi-narthex at the entrance with a U-shaped gallery supported by Ionic columns. The three-aisled nave has four sections of wooden pews. The sanctuary was divided into three parts to accommodate the celebration of the liturgy but has since been obscured by seating. There are three niches in the apse (partially obscured by the seating); the central (largest) one is framed by a band containing the wave motif. The plaster walls are decorated by a picture molding with an egg and dart band, and a denticulated cornice. The openings are surrounded by bands of various classical Greek motifs. The ceiling is divided into three sections with the primary dome in the center and two shallow domes to either side. The areas are divided by moldings containing various classical motifs, and the dome's rims are decorated by these motifs. The drum of the central dome is decorated with swags, brackets and pilasters.

Prepared by Mary Beth Betts
Historic American Buildings Survey
June 1979.

From research compiled by
Federal Highway Administration
Caltrans
1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Route 980 Freeway. John A. Burns, AIA was the HABS project coordinator. The written data was prepared in the HABS office by Mary Beth Betts in June 1979 from research compiled by the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans in 1978. Photographs were taken on May 31, 1978 by Pete Asano.